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Chairman  
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*House Meets at 9:00 a.m. for Morning Hour and  
10:00 a.m. for Legislative Business*

*Anticipated Floor Action:*

- H.R. 3061—Authorizing ‘S’ Visas and Refugee and Entrant Assistance**  
**H.Con.Res. 190—Seeking a Global Consensus to Support a Moratorium on  
Electronic Commerce Tariffs and Taxes**  
**H.Con.Res. 197—Sense of Congress that It Should Not Increase Taxes to Fund  
Additional Government Spending**  
**H.R. 970—Perkins County Rural Water System Act**  
**H.R. 1528—National Geologic Mapping Reauthorization Act**  
**H.R. 2970—Rongelap Resettlement Act**  
**H.R. 2496—Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program  
Reauthorization Act**  
**H.R. 1753—Gas Hydrate Research and Development Act**  
**H.Con.Res. 20—Concerning Economic, Humanitarian, and Other Assistance to  
Northern Somalia**  
**H.Con.Res. 46—Urging an End to the War Between Ethiopia and Eritrea**  
**H.Con.Res. 188—Commending Greece and Turkey for Their Responses to  
Recent Earthquakes**  
**H.R. 1175—Authorizing an Investigation into the Disappearance of Zachary  
Baumel**  
**H.Con.Res. 102—Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the 1949 Geneva  
Conventions**  
**H.R. 2885—Statistical Efficiency Act**



## **Bills Considered Under Suspension of the Rules**

**Floor Situation:** The House will consider the following 14 bills under suspension of the rules as the first order of business today. Each is debatable for 40 minutes, may not be amended, and requires a two-thirds majority vote for passage.

**H.R. 3061—Authorizing “S” Visas and Refugee and Entrant Assistance** reauthorizes two programs under the Immigration and Nationality Act for two years. Specifically, the bill extends the authorization for issuing 250 “S” visas per year through 2001. “S” visas are issued by the Justice Department for informants in international organized crime cases. The current authorization for “S” visas expired on September 13, 1999. This has hindered certain federal investigations. The bill also reauthorizes such sums as necessary under the Refugee Assistance Act (RAA) for FYs 2000-2001. The RAA authorizes assistance to refugees through grants to private non-profit associations and government agencies to provide job training, employment assistance, preventive health services, and cash assistance to help stabilize refugees as they arrive in the U.S. A CBO estimate was unavailable at press time. The bill was introduced by Mr. Smith (TX) and was not considered by a House committee.

**H.Con.Res. 190** urges the president to seek a global consensus to support a permanent international ban on tariffs on electronic commerce (e-commerce) and an international ban on e-commerce taxes. The resolution also urges the president to (1) instruct the United States delegation to the November 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting in Seattle, Washington, to seek to make permanent and binding the moratorium on tariffs on electronic transmissions adopted by the WTO in May 1998; (2) seek adoption and implementation of an international ban on e-commerce taxes by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and its 29 member countries; and (3) oppose a proposal by any country, the United Nations, or any other multilateral organization to establish a “bit tax” on electronic transmissions. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Cox and Mr. Sessions and was not reported by a House committee.

**H.Con.Res. 197** expresses the sense of Congress that it should not increase federal taxes in order to fund additional government spending. On October 19, the House overwhelmingly rejected a bill (H.R. 3085) including the president’s proposed tax increases as well as new and increased user fee proposals by a vote of 419-0. Last Tuesday, Republican leaders reached an agreement with the president that any budget agreement will not spend the Social Security surplus or raise taxes. However, several Democrats, including Senate Minority Leader Daschle, continue to suggest that a tax increase is still a viable possibility. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Toomey and was not reported by a House committee.

**H.R. 970—Perkins County Rural Water System Act** directs the Interior Secretary to make grants to the Perkins County Rural Water System (PCRWS) for the federal share of the costs of planning and constructing the system and repairs to existing public water distribution systems in Perkins County South Dakota. The federal share of the total project construction budget will be seventy-five percent. The bill authorizes \$15 million for the Interior Secretary to plan and construct the system. It prohibits the obligation of system construction funds until federal environmental compliance requirements have been met and a final system engineering report and plan has been prepared and submitted to Congress.

The bill also requires that the PCRWS mitigate fish and wildlife losses during system construction and operation on an acre-for-acre basis (based on ecological equivalency). The bill directs the Western Area Power Administration to make available, from power produced under the Pick-Sloan Missouri River Basin Program, the capacity and energy required to meet the pumping and incidental operational requirements of the system from May 1 to October 31 of each year with power use conditions. CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 970 will require \$18 million in appropriations over the FY 2000-2004 period. The Resources Committee reported the bill by voice vote on October 20, 1999.

**H.R. 1528—National Geologic Mapping Reauthorization Act** reauthorizes the 1992 National Geologic Mapping Reauthorization Act (NGMA; *P.L. 102-285*) and authorizes \$245 million for FYs 1999-

2004 (\$58 million of this amount is already authorized for FYs 1999-2000) and \$64 million for FY 2005 for geological mapping programs at the U.S. Geological Survey. The bill also (1) requires the Interior Secretary to submit to Congress, within one year of enactment, a five-year plan for the geological mapping program, whose main objective is to determine the geological framework of areas vital to the economic and scientific welfare of the U.S.; (2) requires states to develop a geological mapping program with the USGS using federal funding matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis with non-federal funds; (3) requires the NGMA program to report to Congress biennially instead of annually; and (4) establishes a national geological-map database to serve as a national archive that includes all maps developed pursuant to the NGMA. The bill was introduced by Mrs. Cubin and was reported by the Resources Committee by voice vote on June 30, 1999.

**H.R. 2970—Rongelap Resettlement Act** approves a 1996 agreement between the Interior Secretary, acting on behalf of the president, and the Rongelap Atoll local government regarding U.S. assistance to resettle the people of Rongelap. In 1991, Congress established a resettlement and radiological program through a trust fund comprised of contributions from the federal government. To date, the fund has acquired \$40 million and the Rongelap Atoll local government is responsible for managing the fund's assets for implementing resettlement plans. Under the 1996 agreement, the entire principle of the trust fund and at least 50 percent of the annual income is dedicated to island rehabilitation, reconstruction, and resettlement support. In addition, the agreement makes up to 50 percent of the trust annual income available to the Rongelap Atoll local government to manage and administer the resettlement program through local government agencies, enabling the government to carry out recovery programs in the area. These provisions dealing with the annual budget for the local government expire at the end of this fiscal year; the bill extends the disbursement authority for 10 years. The bill also authorizes the Interior Secretary to disapprove expenditures that do not benefit the resettlement and rehabilitation of the area. The bill was introduced by Mr. Young (AK) and was reported by the Resources Committee by voice vote on September 29, 1999.

**H.R. 2496—Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Reauthorization Act** reauthorizes \$250,000 annually (the program's current funding level) for the 1994 Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act (*P.L. 103-340*) for FYs 2001-2005. The 1994 law was designed to expand the stamp design competition to any interested states and insular territories of the U.S., authorize the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to market the stamps, and generate proceeds to support conservation education goals. The bill expands the program to the District of Columbia and U.S. territories. The bill was introduced by Mr. Ortiz and was reported by the Resources Committee by voice vote on October 6, 1999.

**H.R. 1753—Gas Hydrate Research and Development Act** requires the Energy Secretary to consult with the secretaries of Commerce, Defense, and Interior, along with the director of the National Science Foundation, to begin a gas hydrate research and development program to establish gas hydrate (*e.g.*, methane hydrate) as a viable energy resource. The measure allows the Energy Secretary to award grants, contracts, or enter into cooperative agreements with institutions of higher education and industrial enterprises under a competitive, merit-based process to research gas hydrate as an energy source and develop technologies required for the efficient and environmentally sound development of gas hydrate resources.

The bill also requires the Energy Secretary to (1) establish an advisory panel to advise the Energy Secretary on potential applications of gas hydrate; (2) establish programs to promote the long-term interest in gas hydrate as an energy source; (3) report to Congress annually on gas hydrate research and development progress. Finally, the measure authorizes \$35.5 million over five years to carry out the gas hydrate

research and development program. CBO estimates that, assuming appropriations of authorized amounts, enactment will increase discretionary spending by \$35 million over the next five years. The bill was introduced by Mr. Doyle *et al.* and was reported by the Science Committee by voice vote on October 13, 1999. The Resources Committee reported the bill by voice vote on October 18, 1999.

**H.Con.Res. 20—Concerning Economic, Humanitarian, and Other Assistance to Northern Somalia** expresses the sense of Congress (1) urging all international organizations, foreign countries, and U.S. government agencies engaged in economic development, humanitarian aid, and other forms of bilateral or multilateral assistance to evaluate the ability of such assistance to ameliorate human suffering in each region of Somalia, including the northern part of Somalia referred to as Somaliland; (2) urging the president not to delay, diminish, or cancel assistance to certain regions in Somalia because conditions may not be propitious for such assistance in other regions of Somalia; (3) urging the president not to postpone assistance directed toward any region in Somalia waiting for a permanent resolution of the efforts now underway to forge a new government; and (4) calling upon all Somali parties to continue to work toward ending civil strife and adopting a permanent governmental structure most conducive to the well-being and basic human rights of the Somali people.

In addition, the resolution expresses the sense of Congress that the president should (1) work with the international community to help bring an end to the suffering of the Somali people and work toward a negotiated settlement of the Somali conflict; (2) increase the levels of humanitarian assistance provided to Somalia through local and international groups; (3) provide funding for demobilization and demining efforts in the nation; (4) provide assistance for health and education services in Somalia; and (5) work with other donor groups to assist the people of Somalia in reconstruction and development. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Campbell and Mr. Payne on February 2 and was reported by the International Relations Committee on October 19, 1999.

**H.Con.Res. 46—Urging an End to the War Between Ethiopia and Eritrea** expresses the sense of Congress (1) deploring the escalation of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea which has resulted in the massive and senseless loss of life, as well as substantial economic hardship to the peoples of both countries; (2) strongly urging both Eritrea and Ethiopia immediately to bring an end to the violence between the two countries; (3) strongly affirming U.S. support for the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Framework Agreement; and (4) calling on the UN Human Rights Commission and all human rights organizations to investigate human rights abuses in connection with the forced detentions, deportations, and displacements of populations caused by this conflict. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Campbell *et al.* and was reported by the International Relations Committee by voice vote on October 19.

**H.Con.Res. 188—Commending Greece and Turkey for Their Responses to Recent Earthquakes** expresses the sense of Congress (1) commending Greece and Turkey for their mutual and swift response to the recent earthquakes in both countries by providing each other with humanitarian assistance and rescue relief; (2) encouraging the U.S. to continue its efforts to aid both countries as they rebuild after these tragedies; (3) recognizing the renewed spirit of cooperation and the importance of the talks between both countries; and (4) encouraging Greece and Turkey to persevere in resolving outstanding issues. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Bilirakis *et al.* and was reported by the International Relations Committee by voice vote on October 19, 1999.

**H.R. 1175—Authorizing an Investigation into the Disappearance of Zachary Baumel (Considering Senate Amendments)** directs the Department of State to investigate the cases of Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz, and Zvi Feldman. Baumel, an American citizen serving in the Israeli army, along with two

other soldiers (Katz and Feldman) have been missing in action since June 1982, when they were captured by forces affiliated with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon. The last known whereabouts of these soldiers was in Syrian-controlled territory, under the care of a Palestinian faction splintered from the PLO. Diplomatic efforts to secure the release of these men have been periodically unsuccessful. The bill directs the State Department to discuss this matter on an urgent basis with officials of Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, and other appropriate governments. The bill requires the president to consider the willingness of these governments and authorities to assist in locating and securing the release of these men when decided whether to provide economic assistance. Finally, the bill requires the State Department to report to Congress, within 90 days of enactment, detailing any investigations it has made into this matter. Following the initial report, the State Department has 15 days to deliver additional information to Congress. The bill was introduced by Mr. Lantos *et al.* and was reported by the International Relations Committee by voice vote on June 10, 1999.

**H.Con.Res. 102—Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions** expresses the sense of Congress (1) recognizing the historic and humanitarian significance of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of these treaties; (2) exhorting combatants everywhere to respect the red cross emblem in order to protect innocent and vulnerable populations on every side of conflicts; (3) commending the International Committee of the Red Cross and the more than 175 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies for providing relief and assistance to the victims of war as prescribed by these conventions; (4) applauding the Promise of Humanity gathering organized by the 1999 American Red Cross in Washington, D.C., as an important reminder of our responsibilities to educate future generations about the principles of international humanitarian law; and (5) commending the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross for its work in educating the world's citizens about the principles of international humanitarian law as embodied in the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

In addition, H.Con.Res. 102 expresses the sense of Congress (1) inviting the American Red Cross to educate members and congressional staff about the 1949 Geneva Conventions; (2) supporting the anniversary theme of the International Committee of the Red Cross that “Even War Has Limits”; and (3) calling upon the president to issue a proclamation recognizing the conventions as critically important instruments for protecting human dignity in times of armed conflict and limiting the savagery of war. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Johnson (TX) and was reported by the International Relations Committee by voice vote on October 19, 1999.

**H.R. 2885—Statistical Efficiency Act** seeks to improve the quality and efficiency of federal statistical programs by allowing certain federal agencies to share statistical data under procedures that safeguard its confidentiality. The bill designates eight federal agencies as Statistical Data Centers (SDC) and requires these centers to share statistical data or information. The measure limits the use of data or information to statistical purposes and requires the centers to ensure confidentiality of individually identifiable information.

The measure establishes conditions under which a federal agency may disclose statistical data or information to an SDC. Specifically, the bill allows the disclosure of data or information if (1) the disclosure and use of the information is not prohibited by law; (2) the conditions of disclosure are specified in a written agreement between the SDC and the agency supplying the information; and (3) the data or information is not disclosed in identifiable form without the written consent of parties that could be identified. The bill requires the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director to coordinate and oversee the confidentiality and disclosure of policies. Finally, the bill establishes penalties for unlawfully disclosing statistical data or information by an SDC agent.

Government agencies regularly collect information for statistical purposes. This information is vital to many aspects of government. Federal regulations aimed at ensuring the confidentiality of collected data and information prevent agencies from sharing this information, causing many agencies to duplicate their efforts. For example, prior to the enactment of the Census Address List Improvement Act (*P.L. 103-430*), the U.S. Post Office did not share address-related information with the Census Bureau, which must collect a comprehensive address list to conduct the decennial census. Thus, the Census Bureau had to purchase address information from commercial entities, which proved not only more expensive but also less accurate. Supporters of H.R. 2885 argue that allowing agencies to share statistical data and information will improve information efficiency and cut down on waste. A CBO cost estimate was unavailable at press time. The bill was introduced by Mr. Horn *et al.* and was reported by the Government Reform Committee by voice vote on September 22, 1999.

**Additional Information:** See *Legislative Digest*, Vol. XXVIII, #31, October 22, 1999.



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